

**CLAIMS**

1. A mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing bonded to the fabric layer, wherein the fabric layer includes a knitted polyester fabric.

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2. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer includes a microknitted polyester fabric.

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3. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer includes a warp-knitted plush polyester fabric.

4. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric includes a pile yarn and a ground yarn.

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5. The mat according to claim 4, wherein the pile yarn is a micro-denier yarn of less than or equal to 1.1 denier.

6. The mat according to claim 4, wherein the ground yarn is a monofilament of no less than 10 denier, or a multi-filament yarn.

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7. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric has a first face that in the finished mat is the exposed face of the fabric layer, and said first face treated to form a plush or pile.

8. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer has a sanded surface.

9. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric is chemically treated to  
5 render it hydrophilic.

10. The mat according to claim 9, wherein the fabric is chemically treated with an anionic-ethoxylated sulfonated polyester and a high molecular weight ethoxylated polyester.

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11. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer has a textured surface that includes raised and/or recessed surface formations.

12. The mat according to claim 11, wherein the surface formations have an  
15 average height of 0.1-2.0mm, preferably 0.2-0.5mm.

13. The mat according to claim 11, wherein the surface formations have an average surface area of 0.2-100mm<sup>2</sup>, preferably 1.0-20mm<sup>2</sup>.

20 14. The mat according to claim 11, wherein the surface formations are randomly distributed over substantially the whole of the fabric layer.

15. The mat according to claim 11, wherein the surface formations are formed on the face of the rubber backing that is bonded to the fabric layer.

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16. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer is printed.
17. The mat according to claim 16, wherein the mat has printed borders.
- 5 18. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the fabric layer covers substantially the whole of one face of the rubber backing.
19. The mat according to claim 18, wherein the fabric layer has cut edges.
- 10 20. The mat according to claim 1, wherein the rubber backing has a thickness of 0.5-5mm, preferably 1-3mm.
21. The mat according to claim 1, the mat being suitable for use as a drip mat.
- 15 22. A mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing bonded to the fabric layer, wherein the fabric layer is chemically treated to render it hydrophilic.
23. The mat according to claim 22, wherein the fabric layer has a textured surface.
- 20 24. The mat according to claim 22, wherein the mat has an absorbency of at least 15ml before overflow for a 10cm x 10cm sample.
- 25 25. The mat according to claim 22, wherein the mat has a liquid retention after draining of less than 5ml for a 10cm x 10cm sample.

26. The mat according to claim 22, wherein the fabric layer has a pile surface that provides for sharp definition printing.

27. A mat according to claim 26, wherein the pile surface has substantially  
5 instantaneous moisture dissipation.

28. A mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing bonded to the fabric layer, wherein the fabric is at least one of hydrophilic, absorbent, wicking, launderable, printable, non-fraying, dimensionally stable, colourfast, and  
10 combinations thereof.

29. The mat according to claim 28, wherein said mat is at least one of a drip mat, poster mat, floor mat, place mat, coaster, stair riser, carpet tile, and taxi mat.

30. A method of manufacturing a mat having a fabric layer and a rubber  
15 backing, wherein an uncured rubber backing sheet is cured and bonded to a sheet of fabric in a heated press to form a rubber-backed sheet, and the rubber-backed sheet is cut up into individual mats.

31. The method according to claim 30, wherein the fabric layer includes a  
20 knitted polyester fabric.

32. The method according to claim 30, wherein an image is printed onto the fabric layer during the curing and bonding process in the heated press.

33. The method according to claim 32, wherein the image includes a plurality of printed margins.

34. The method according to claim 33, wherein the rubber-backed sheet is cut  
5 up along the printed margins to separate the individual mats.

35. The method according to claim 30, wherein the fabric is chemically treated to render it hydrophilic.

10 36. The method according to claim 35, wherein the fabric is chemically treated with an anionic-ethoxylated sulfonated polyester and a high molecular weight ethoxylated polyester.

15 37. The method according to claim 30, wherein the fabric layer is provided with a textured surface.

38. The method according to claim 37, wherein the textured surface is formed by pressing the fabric layer against a texture sheet during the curing and bonding process in the heated press.

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39. A method of manufacturing a mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing, wherein an uncured rubber backing sheet is cured and bonded to a sheet of fabric in a heated press to form a rubber-backed sheet, and the fabric is chemically treated to render it hydrophilic.

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40. A method of manufacturing a mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing, wherein an uncured rubber backing sheet is cured and bonded to a sheet of fabric in a heated press to form a rubber-backed sheet, and the fabric is provided with a textured surface.

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41. A method of manufacturing a mat having a fabric layer and a rubber backing, wherein an uncured rubber backing sheet is cured and bonded to a sheet of fabric in a heated press to form a rubber-backed sheet, and wherein the fabric layer includes a knitted polyester fabric.

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42. The method according to claim 41, wherein the fabric is at least one of hydrophilic, absorbent, wicking, launderable, printable, non-fraying, dimensionally stable, colourfast, and combinations thereof.

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43. A mat manufactured by the method of claim 30.

44. A mat manufactured by the method of claim 41.

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45. An assembly or item having an upper fabric layer and a lower liquid impervious layer or backing that is at least one of attached, adhered, bonded, stitched, sprayed, coated, welded, glued, melted, tacked, needled, and combinations thereof, thereto or thereon.

46. A mat, pad, blotter, multi-layer item, laminate, article, assembly, piece, textile material, composite, or the like having a synthetic fabric layer and a liquid impervious backing or layer.

5 47. A mat, pad, blotter, multi-layer item, laminate, article, assembly, piece, textile material, composite, or the like according to claim 46, wherein the fabric layer is treated to be hydrophilic or contains hydrophilic fibres.

48. A composite multi-layer item, assembly, article, piece or textile material,  
10 having a fabric layer and an impermeable backing, wherein the fabric is treated to render it hydrophilic.

49. A composite multi-layer item, assembly, article, piece or textile material,  
having a fabric layer and an impermeable backing, wherein the fabric consists of  
15 hydrophilic fibres.

50. A mat, pad, or the like having an absorbent, hydrophilic upper surface and a lower surface that is substantially impervious to liquid.